

Marcos' Foe Denies He's CIA Agent

By Rommel Corro
Associated Press

MANILA—Former senator Benigno Aquino Jr. said in a speech televised from his jail cell yesterday that he is not a CIA agent and the defense secretary, who made the accusation, is a liar and must apologize.

Aquino, imprisoned since President Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law five years ago, was granted permission to respond to the charges made by Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile.

He said he worked "with the CIA" but not for the agency and there is a significant difference.

"If you are under the payroll of the CIA, if you are passing government secrets, that's very bad," Aquino said.

He said this country has an agreement with the United States to exchange information, and "I worked with the CIA on instructions of three presidents, for which I was commended."

The 45-year-old leader of the opposition Liberal Party was expected to run against Marcos for the presidency in 1973, but he was jailed and no elections were held. He said he would sue Enrile unless the secretary makes a public apology.

Aquino and two alleged Communist leaders were tried by a military court last year and sentence to die by firing squad. Marcos ordered his case reopened after Aquino charged he had been denied due process and demanded a civilian trial.

Aquino's speech was videotaped in his cell early in the day and televised in the evening. It was not edited. Spokesmen for Marcos said he thought Aquino's statements were constructive.

"Enrile has maligned and defamed me," said Aquino, adding the defense secretary had used "black propaganda" against him.

Enrile, in two television appearances last week, said Aquino sent secret letters from his jail cell to persons Enrile claimed were Communists. Enrile also claimed Aquino admitted to being a CIA agent.

Aquino said he wrote letters to leaders of the Communist New People's Army because he "felt it was

my duty as a senator to know why they were fighting the government.

"As secretary general of the opposition, I would be the first to congratulate President Marcos" if the dissident movement has been dismantled, Aquino said.

Aquino has been given permission by Marcos to be interviewed on television as head of a 21-man opposition slate running in the April 7 elections for seats in an interim National Assembly.

Aquino also said the Philippines' Central Bank has paid about \$1.7 million to an American public relations firm to improve the image of the government. Aquino claimed a number of the firm's officials are former CIA agents.

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